

The Cannon in the Garage

Investigation of the Pacific Heights arsenal found Friday may be in the inter-state bracket, it was learned today.

The federal agent who led the raid is Carl E. Stone, special investigator for the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Unit, which has jurisdiction in federal gun law violations.

The raid took place at 2801 Broadway, the home of William Thoresen III and his wife, Louise.

30 TONS

Thirty tons of weapons and ammunition were seized and Mrs. Thoresen was arrested on a state charge of possessing illegal weapons.

Her husband is in New York, their attorney said.

The guns included, according to initial reports, four operable machine guns.

Today informed sources changed this to 30 submachine guns and 50 large machine guns, all in working condition.

ARTILLERY

They also declared that after the initial raid, Federal agents and U.S. Attorney Cecil Poole discovered the arsenal's "piece de resistance" in the garage of a Thoresen friend five blocks away.

It was described as a piece of field artillery "as big as a French 75 and with twice the fire power."

Thoresen has been arrested a number of times on charges involving weapons and dynamite. Federal gun charges are pending now in New York against him and his wife.

TUCSON BLASTS

Thoresen is the son of William Thoresen II of Chicago, president of the Great Western Steel Co.

William III has been involved not only in gun charges but in setting off dynamite explosions near a radio station in Tucson, Ariz.

Reported discovery of the artillery piece in the friend's garage heightened speculation as to what was behind Thoresen's massive accumulation of weapons, which included thousands of rounds of ammunition, side arms, rifles and shotguns and even flame throwers.

Poole declared neither he

not federal agents had yet found the answer.

Thoresen's lawyer, J. W. Ehrlich, told The Examiner his client is simply a man obsessed with a desire to collect guns in huge amounts.

CONSPIRACY

Ehrlich declared further that Thoresen has never been identified as a member of any extreme rightist group nor with any para-military organization. He attributed the raid to a "conspiracy" against his client.

"Those guns came from all over the country," Ehrlich said. "Either somebody was watching the shipments or somebody willfully fingered Thoresen."

SHRUGGED OFF

"My conspiracy theory is borne out by these facts: The man who led the raid was Stone, a tax agent from Seattle. U. S. Attorney Poole and one of his assistants, Jerrold Ladar, were there. They must have had orders from some other place."

The conspiracy charge was shrugged off in official circles.

The federal gun law, not yet invoked in this case, makes it a crime for a person to send or receive such weapons if he has been convicted of a crime for which the punishment is more than a year. Thoresen has been, Poole said.

He said the federal law can be invoked in the case here, of course, but that neither his office nor the ATU is ready to act.

The law, he added, also

makes it a federal offense to possess unlicensed weapons, which include submachine guns and larger automatic weapons. Penalty upon conviction is five year in prison, \$5000 fine, or both.

The weaponry was carted away Friday in Army trucks and stored for safe keeping in a couple of unused bunkers at the Presidio.

Poole said Army ordnance officers and the city Fire Marshal's office were "shocked" that anyone would keep so much explosive ammunition in a home.

During her husband's absence, Mrs. Thoresen has been living there alone with her 5-year-old son, Mike, who wears a pair of holstered toy six-shooters.

Poole said it took ATU officers and his office until 10:30 p.m. Friday to inventory the arsenal — the list is 37 pages long.

N.Y. WARRANT

He would not predict when or if local federal charges would be brought. Mrs. Thoresen, he said, will be taken before the U.S. Commissioner as soon as a New York warrant arrives. Action against her husband must wait until he is found.

A possible involvement of the CIA with the seized arsenal arose when the raiders discovered, in addition, a "carton full of currency," and a federal official remarked cryptically:

"I wonder if we've torpedeed the CIA again?"

He wouldn't elaborate.

The bizarre case has touched off a series of provocative questions, such as:

- Where did Thoresen get the huge assortment of weapons, from whom and how were they shipped?

- What started the federal inquiry?

- If a field artillery piece as big as a French 75 actually was found, how was it shipped and transported to a neighborhood garage?

- Is there something deeper to the case than a rich young man's fetish about guns?